



The ITS Project Management Framework

Information Technology Services

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Introduction

At Southwest TN Community College, serving on information technology (IT) projects has become a common if not universal experience for most ITS staff. This experience can raise questions about the nature of IT projects at Southwest and the methodology behind their management. In addition, the success or failure of these ventures can significantly impact college culture, policy and procedure. The ITS Project Management Office (PMO) recognizes that the integral role of IT projects in Southwest's dynamic academic environment requires a clear methodology be established—a methodology that assists staff in consistently and successfully engaging in projects and in achieving project goals.

The PMO, in developing and building the framework, conducted detailed reviews of IT project management methodologies at other universities and colleges. The department reviewed numerous project management resources and assessed commercially available enterprise project portfolio management (PPM) tools. Throughout, the PMO kept in mind the scope of the framework and the needs of target audiences. In addition, the project team ensured their work aligned with existing college IT governance initiatives and committees. The result is a framework that facilitates the successful closure and proper compliance of IT projects at Southwest TN Community College.

Southwest has chosen an IT Project Management Framework that is standardized and right-sized based on the PMBOK methodology from the Project Management Institute (PMI). Project Managers and Leads should use this framework to qualify and complete all projects that meet the ITS PMO requirements. Project teams should employ it as an integral part of the workflow for all project team members and activities. To ensure high adoption of the PM methodology, the workflows and expectations are detailed in this document.

Why Create a Project Management Framework?

The Project Management Institute defines a project as “a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result”¹. While this definition is straightforward, questions exist, particularly within the context of how project management is defined by Southwest Tennessee Community College. Some of the following questions may sound familiar:

- How did the project start? Who sponsored it?
- How are projects classified? Why do some projects require oversight and others do not?
- Why do some IT projects succeed when others are labeled as failures? How do you know if a project was successful?
- When is a project complete?
- Is the person in charge trained in proper management techniques?
- What, exactly, is a “project”?

This framework provides a means of answering these questions within the local environment of Southwest Tennessee Community College, using project management definitions and best practices when most appropriate. Before employing the IT Project Management Framework, however, an individual must assess whether the work under consideration is an IT project or simply an operational activity.

Project versus Operational Activities

Projects are defined as something unique that has a definitive beginning and an end. On many occasions, an agreement between ITS and other departments must exist before the project can start. Examples of projects include the installation of a new software application or system, procurement or refresh of equipment as part of a capital construction project, or the improvement or full upgrade of an existing process or application.

Operational activities are ongoing routine tasks to an existing application or system. Examples of operational activities include minor upgrades that make changes to an existing system or process, such as server patches, replacing end of life equipment, or the annual refresh of a classroom, and other performance modifications that are part of the normal business operations.

The PMO can assist with the proposer in determining if a request is a project or an operational activity, though the project sponsor or functional manager has the final determination.

Project Management Methodology

Southwest TN Community College has adopted the Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK) methodology as its standardized method to approaching project management. Developed by the Project Management Institute (PMI), a non-profit organization that develops global project management standards for organizations around the world, the PMBOK process chart and all of its processes has been right sized to meet the needs of our organization. PMI global standards provide guidelines, rules and characteristics for project, program and portfolio management. These standards are widely accepted and, when consistently applied, they help you, your global peers, and your organization achieve professional excellence². The current PMI process chart defines processes that if followed, increase the chances of a project having a successful outcome. We have customized these processes to fit our organization and culture.

FY2014 – 2015 Steering Committee

Name	Department
Renee Hancock	Enterprise Application Services
Tamara McColgan	Mathematics
Kathy Archie	Fiscal Operations
Thalia Wilson	Admissions and Records
Michelle Newman	Purchasing
Todd Blankenbeckler	Distance Education
Selena Grimes	Academic Admin Services
Jeremy Burnett	Academic Affairs
Joshua Conway	Project Management Office
Annie Garvin	Media Services
Ed Ashworth	Client Services Academics
Reginald Frazier	Physical Plant

The IT Steering Committee will meet quarterly to review all project requests. The committee will use a standardized scoring matrix to rate projects and approved based off the overall IT project portfolio and resource availability. See the Steering Committee project definition for a more definitive description.

Project Management Definitions

Project Management Office (PMO)

A Project Management Office (PMO) is a group or department within a business, agency or enterprise that defines and maintains standards for project management within the organization. The primary goal of a PMO is to achieve benefits from standardizing and following project management policies, processes and methods. The PMO will also assist with the creation and approval of Project Requests from all departments within the college.

Information Technology (IT) Project Management

IT Project Management is the application of knowledge, skills and techniques to execute projects effectively and efficiently.

Project Management Methodology

Provides Information Technology Services (ITS) project teams with a set of standards to initiate and manage individual projects. The Methodology provides tools to make the project manager's job a little easier. It contains definitions, guidelines, and templates for the various project management activities needed to deliver successful projects.

Project Management Framework

Project Management Framework is the combination of project management methodologies and processes used to manage projects, project tools and software, forms or templates, IT resource utilization, and processes to manage projects from beginning to end.

Project Portfolio Management (PPM)

Project Portfolio Management is the process of selecting and determining the best grouping and sequencing of projects to achieve an organization's business goals.

Steering Committee

The steering committee is a governance body that reviews, monitors and prioritizes major IT projects from a cross-functional perspective.

Project Management Roles and Responsibilities

Project Manager

The Project Manager is responsible for managing and completing assigned projects on behalf of the project sponsors, the department, and the college. Approval of the project charter grants the project manager the authority to staff the project team, plan and assign project tasks, procure resources to complete the project, and utilize the systems necessary to complete the project objectives.

Project Sponsor

The Project Sponsor is the individual within the college that is responsible for creating the business case for the project. This individual has the authority to define project goals, but is also responsible for ensuring the project team is dedicated to completing the project.

Stakeholders

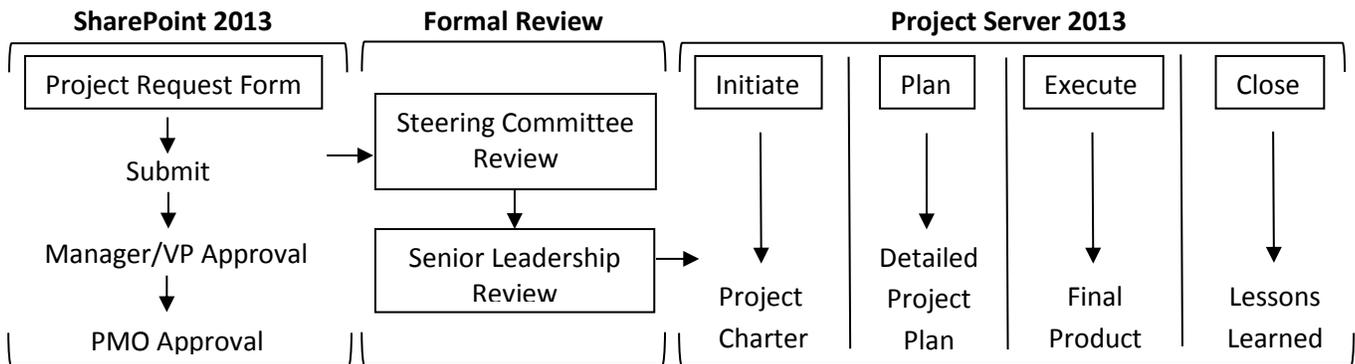
Stakeholders are persons and departments actively involved with the project whose interest may be affected positively or negatively by the execution or completion of the project. Stakeholders can include customers, sponsors, users of the current system or process, outside organizations, and students. Users and other groups may be involved in the testing of the proposed system or process as part of the overall project plan.

Project Team

The Project Team is composed of individuals who report to the project manager, ITS department, or other departments involved in the project plan. The project team is responsible for performing and completing project tasks as assigned by the project manager to meet the project objectives.

Project Management Software

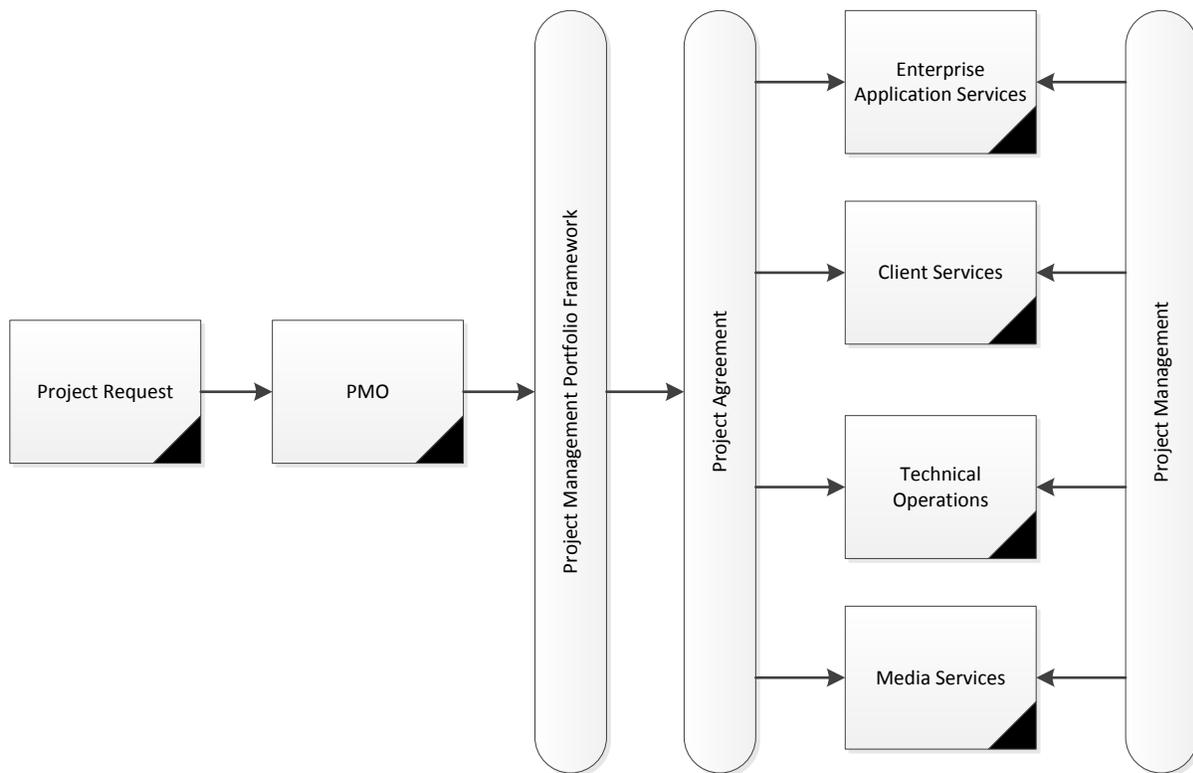
Southwest TN Community College has adopted Project Server 2013 as its primary tool to facilitate the project management process. Project Server 2013 has been customized to model our organization's project management framework. The project request process and the customized project phases in the Project Server 2013 application are defined as:



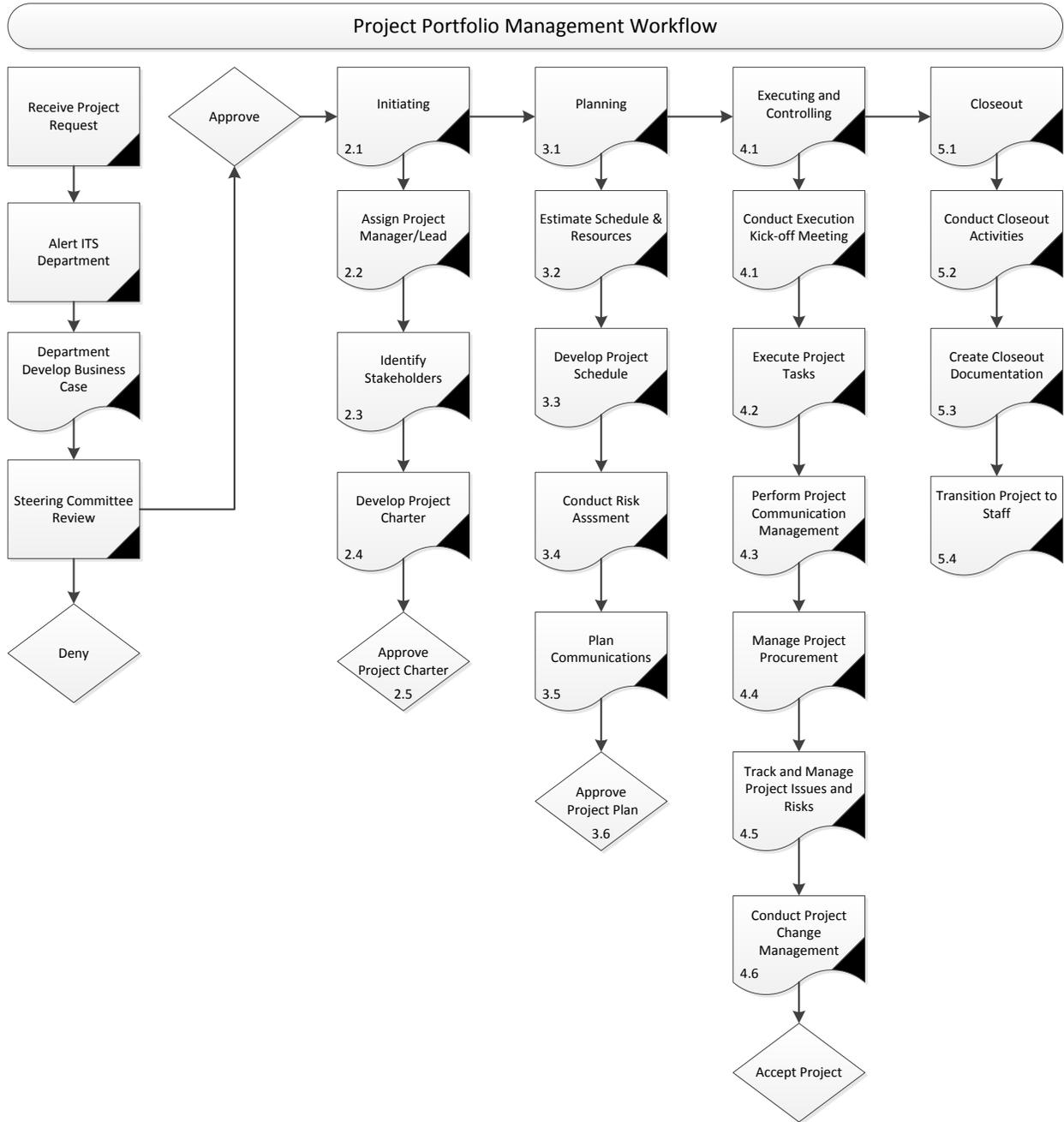
The PMO is responsible for approving the Project Request and presenting to the IT Steering Committee on a quarterly basis. The project manager is responsible for managing the approved project as outlined in the project charter, including the deliverables each phase of the project produces.

New Project Management Process Defined

The new project management framework begins with the submittal of a project request for an internal ITS project or an external project that utilizes IT resources. Once a Project Request has been accepted by the PMO, the project will then follow the PM framework. The ITS department managing the project will further define project objectives, estimate IT resources, procurement costs, and project timelines. The steering committee will review each project request and accept projects based off business alignment and IT resource demand. Once the project has been approved by the steering committee, the PMO will assist in the management of the project as requested by project manager.



Project Management Phases and Activities



Project Requests

To create a project request, the PMO has an official form for your department to complete. The form asks for basic project information. Before the Project Management Office can consider your requests, the project request must have the approval of the departmental management. If the project budget is more than \$9,999, a VP approval is required.

Estimating

Once a project request is received, the PMO will facilitate a meeting with the ITS department responsible for leading the project. The purpose of the meeting is to gather more details to provide a high level estimation of the procurement costs, ITS resources needed, and time needed to complete the project. This high level business case will aid the steering committee in approving projects that add the most value to the college.

Initiate

The initiate phase marks the official start of a project after the steering committee approval. Though a high level business case was developed for purpose of presenting to the steering committee, the initiate phase records the project scope, procurement costs, number of resources, key stakeholders, proposed milestones and project timeline, all documented in a project charter. During this phase, a project manager/team lead is assigned to lead the project team and its objectives. The deliverable for the initiate phase is a Project Charter signed by the project sponsors and project manager/team lead.

Plan

During the planning phase of the project, the project team develops a more comprehensive plan to execute the project to a successful completion. The project manager reserves resources for the project, creates a lists of tasks needed to complete the project, estimates the duration of each tasks, assigns tasks to the project team, conducts a risk assessment, mitigates risks, and finalizes the procurement costs of the project. The deliverable for the planning phase is for the project team to agree to and sign a detailed project plan that provides a target date for project completion.

Executing

During the execution phase, the project team performs the task as outlined in the detailed project plan. The project manager/team lead also holds frequent status meetings, communicates project updates to key stakeholders and sponsors, and monitors the progress of the project using project management tools. Changes to the scope, costs, or timeline of the project should follow the standard change management procedures.

Close

A project is formally closed in this phase. It includes a series of important tasks which include official acceptance of the project deliverable, relieving ITS resources, rewarding and recognition of the team members, conducting post-mortem reviews of the project process, and saving all important documentation for future use.

References

1. Project Management Institute, Inc.
<http://www.pmi.org/About-Us/About-Us-What-is-Project-Management.aspx>